

09:35 AM Jul. 21, 1998 PT

The Russian state police has a plan to monitor every piece of data sent over Russian bandwidth.

Codenamed "SORM," the project was apparently created at the behest of the security agency FSB, formerly known as the KGB, and would compel all Internet service providers to install a real-time snooping device in their main computers. The snooper would be connected directly to police headquarters through a dedicated high-speed line.

The draft project, published on a Russian Web site, says the system has to enable the security service to upload "all information, incoming and outgoing, for individual subscribers of each network."

Anatoly Levanchuk, an electronic-documents consultant who published the SORM draft, said it would be "like having the FSB's word of honor that they won't switch on the listening device they've just installed in your apartment or office unless they really need to."

An FSB official interviewed by The Guardian of London would neither confirm nor deny the existence of the project. But a spokesman for the Russian Association of Network Services, an Internet service providers group, confirmed that the association had held four meetings to discuss the project's implications.

Some ISPs fear losing their operating licenses if they don't comply, and one service provider noted that the Russian language has no adequate translation for the word privacy.

End of story